

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the instant application:

**Listing of Claims:**

1. (Previously Presented) A validation method comprising the steps of:
  - identifying a host within a first grid of a grid environment currently unassociated with a ghost agent, wherein said host is a software object operating in the first grid, and wherein said grid environment comprises at least two distinct grids;
  - associating a ghost agent in the first grid with said host, wherein the ghost agent is a software object configured to replicate actions of an associated host software object and record data related to the replicated actions of the associated host software object;
  - comparing the recorded data related to said replicated actions with validation data;
  - generating a validation output based upon said comparing step;
  - moving said host from the first grid to a second grid within said grid environment; and,
  - in response to moving said host to said second grid, moving said associated ghost agent from said first grid to said second grid within said grid environment so as to follow movements of said host within the grid environment and to permit the ghost agent to replicate actions of said host in said second grid and record data related to said replicated actions in said second grid.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:
  - inputting at least one performance specification into said ghost agent, wherein said validation data comprises said performance specification; and,
  - determining at least one performance metric for at least one of said replicated

actions, wherein said comparing step compares said performance metric with said performance specification.

3. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:
  - inputting at least one resource utilization specification into said ghost agent, wherein said validation data comprises said resource utilization specification; and,
  - determining at least one resource utilization metric for at least one of said replicated actions, wherein said comparing step compares said resource utilization metric with said resource utilization specification.
4. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:
  - inputting at least one load specification into said ghost agent, wherein said validation data comprises said load specification; and,
  - determining at least one load metric resulting from the execution of at least one of said replicated actions, wherein said comparing step compares said load metric with said load specification.
5. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:
  - executing a test routine;
  - generating test output for said test routine, wherein said validation data comprises said test output; and,
  - determining output for at least one of said replicated actions, wherein said comparing step compares said replicated action output with said test output.
6. (Original) The method of claim 5, further comprising the steps of:
  - inputting said test routine into said ghost agent; and,

executing said test routine within said ghost agent.

7. (Cancelled)

8. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:  
identifying a location for recording validation output that is external to said ghost agent; and,  
conveying said validation output to said identified location.

9. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:  
receiving a validation command from a source external to said host and external to said ghost agent; and,  
performing at least one operation with said ghost agent responsive to said validation command.

10. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:  
selecting a plurality of hosts; and,  
for each selected host, repeating said associating step, said replicating step, said comparing step, and said generating step.

11-31. (Cancelled).